TL1329-44

Jakarta's latest 'confidence-building measure'

On 20 July, the Indonesian government announced that it had given the go-ahead for talks to take place between pro-integration and anti-integration East Timorese. Foreign Minister Ali Alatas gave the green light after meeting President Suharto, a standard procedure by cabinet ministers to signal that the move has Suharto's approval. Following the announcement, Francisco Lopes da Cruz, Suharto's recently appointed 'roving ambassador' for East Timor affairs and the regime's top-ranking Timorese collaborator, stepped forward to handle the matter on Suharto's behalf.

Many commentators were taken by surprise, seeing this as a concession to world opinion made by Suharto under pressure. On the contrary, it is a slick diplomatic manoeuvre designed to fend off persistent calls for the East Timorese, in particular the East Timorese resistance, to be involved in the UN-sponsored talks between Indonesia and Portugal.

After insisting that Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor "will not be an issue", Lopes da Cruz set the stage for the talks by saying he recently met Fretilin's Abilio Araujo in Brussels and claimed that the initiative for the talks had come from the latter. Abilio Araujo still heads Fretilin in Portugal and was for years head of Fretilin's overseas representative body, the DEF. Others see the origins of the idea as having come from Indonesian army intelligence which played such a crucial role in the early period of Indonesia's war to grab East Timor.

Origins of the 'talks' idea

The first mention of talks between pro-integration and anti-integration East Timorese came in April this year, just before the UN-sponsored Rome talks between Indonesia and Portugal on 21 April. The idea was mooted in interviews made by Indonesian journalist Petrus Suryadi, during a visit to Lisbon. Suryadi who writes for the Jakarta daily, *Suara Pembaruan* is known to have close links to army intelligence, BAIS, through the Indonesian military attachés in Brussels and The Hague. His trip to Lisbon is known to have taken place at their instigation.

Many East Timorese political exiles in Lisbon were wary of Suryadi's background. The only ones to respond to his approaches were Abilio Araujo and Jose Martins, leader of the minuscule Kota party who in 1975 threw in his lot with Indonesia, defected a year later, but more recently again took a pronounced pro-Jakarta stance. Few people doubt that Martins has all along been a tool of military intelligence. It therefore came as no surprise to read about his enthusiasm over moves from Jakarta for talks between East Timorese.

The shift in position by Abilio Araujo came as more of a surprise and it is far from clear that he is speaking as a Fretilin leader or that his enthusiastic response to such talks represents the views of a party that has been the staunchest opponent to the Indonesian invasion and led the armed resistance in the interior from 1975 on.

In an interview with *Suara Pembaruan* on 8 April, Araujo came out with a number of remarks that are uncharacteristic for a Fretilin leader. He criticised the young people who participated in the Santa Cruz demonstration in Dili on 12 November 1991 for unfurling banners which, he claimed, had "acted as a provocation". He went on to accuse the Catholic church in East Timor of going beyond the bounds of its 'non-political' role and then declared that all sides in the East Timor conflict, Indonesia, Portugal and Fretilin should acknowledge that they had made mistakes in the past.

It was in a later interview with Radio Netherlands that he made the suggestion that pro- and anti-integration Timorese should talk to each other. He acknowledged that Petrus Suryadi had "offered his services" to make this possible. It is difficult to believe that Araujo does not know he is accepting the services of the very intelligence network which has played such a sinister and

de-stabilising role in East Timor throughout the history of Indonesia's war against East Timor, bringing so much suffering to the people of East Timor. He explained that the idea of direct talks between pro- and anti-integration Timorese was being promoted because Jakarta has blocked any notion of Timorese participation in the UN-sponsored talks.

In an interview last month with the Lisbon daily, *Diario de Noticias* [30.VI.1993], Araujo acknowledged that the talks could only happen if Jakarta gave the green light and thought they would take place before the next round of talks between Indonesia and Portugal in New York on 17 September this year. He also revealed that he now believes that the armed resistance in East Timor is "worn out" and that all that now remains for the East Timorese is to "wage cultural resistance".

Besides Petrus Suryadi, the other figure to emerge as a key link in this murky tale is the Portuguese journalist-turned-businessman, Nuno Rocha, a close friend of former Indonesian foreign minister, Mochtar Kusumaatmadja who became notorious for his glowing report of a visit to East Timor in the late 1980s and later published a book entitled, *East Timor, the 27th province*.

Rocha visited Jakarta in April this year to sound out the Indonesian government on Araujo's willingness to hold talks. His announcement that Jakarta would insist on Jakarta, not Bangkok, as the venue and would refuse to allow any discussion on Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor led Araujo to abort the talks at that stage.

As yet, Araujo is the only anti-integration East Timorese in exile to want to take part in these talks. The initiative has been roundly condemned by CNRM overseas representative, Jose Ramos-Horta. The deputy chief of the UDT in Portugal has also rejected the idea, saying that the Timorese should only accept a format which involves Portugal as the administering power.

Discrediting the resistance

So, what are Jakarta's motives in promoting the talks? It hopes to win international favour by appearing to allow opposing East Timorese to come together in an attempt at reconciliation. Jakarta would like to dress this up as a 'confidence-building measure' to end the stalemate in the UN-sponsored talks.

But the international community should be warned that Jakarta's format is deliberately designed to exclude the East Timorese resistance. Anti-integration exiles, whoever they are, are no substitute for the mass movement that has waged resistance inside East Timor, in the mountains, in the towns and villages and within the Church.

It is Jakarta's intention in particular to exclude the embodiment of that resistance, the National Council of Maubere Resistance, whose leader, Xanana Gusmao, was sentenced to life by an Indonesian court in May this year, and now languishes, incommunicado, in some God-forsaken prison goodness knows where.

The arrest and trial of Xanana Gusmao set in trail a strategy to obliterate both him personally and the entire resistance movement, hoping to remove them as the rightful participants in any negotiations to lead to an act of self-determination in East Timor. Before his arrest, Xanana Gusmao repeatedly called for talks leading to a peaceful solution to the conflict and declared his willingness to take part in talks. He returned to this theme in the defence plea that he was prevented from reading out in court, when he called on the international community "to press Jakarta to accept dialogue with the Portuguese and the Timorese in the search for an internationally-acceptable solution".

To be published in TAPOL Bulletin no.118, August 1993